## Sustainable INL News

Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs

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## Sustaining our resources, sustaining our economy

n today's tumultuous economic climate, the concept of a sustainable economy seems to be an ideal, if not unreachable, goal. Yet INL is working toward economic sustainability through methods that many would usually categorize as environmental efforts.

A basic economic model is defined by the balance of supply and demand, but what happens when supply becomes scarce? Today, there is an increasing scarcity of natural capital – intact forests, healthy air, energy resources, etc. – and the increase in its value due to increasing scarcity has led to the awareness of the connection between environmental and economic sustainability.

INL's economic sustainability efforts reflect this relationship between the economy and the environment. Our research in renewable energy is one path to economic sustainability.

Examining methods that allow for a better use of natural resources allows us to maximize our natural capital without depleting our resources. Making these forms of energy more affordable and practical for the public contributes to a larger scale of economic sustainability.

There are obvious economic outcomes as a result of environmental sustainability such as energy savings, but other benefits are not as apparent. In the 2006 Stern Report, it states the cost of inaction on climate change will be up to 20 times greater in the future than measures required to

"Sustainability is the emerging doctrine that economic growth and development must take place, and be maintained over time, within the limits set by ecology . . ."

- William D. Ruckelshaus, 1989

The laboratory is also using energy, fuel and water more efficiently. A recent Energy Savings Performance Contract at the Materials & Fuels Complex will reduce annual electricity use by 5 percent and carbon dioxide emissions by 12.8 million pounds per year. While these savings are great for the environment, they also help INL's bottom line. The savings from these upgrades will pay the \$33 million cost in 16 years.

address the issue today.

If natural resources become unavailable, and there is no alternative, then economic and social instability are inevitable. The need for INL's research and energy-savings efforts are greater than ever as this balance for natural resources continues to impact the sustainability of our economy.

## Sustainable INL Program

Chris Ischay 208-526-4382 Christopher.ischay@inl.gov

Ernest Fossum 208-526-2513 Ernest.fossum@inl.gov

We're on the Web! www.inl.gov/sustainable



